

Why Colored Jurors?

AS THE Sweet trial got under way in Detroit last Tuesday, forty white men were examined and asked whether they held any race prejudice. Only fifteen admitted they did not. This is in Michigan, a northern state. Fifteen out of forty, in what is probably one of the best states so far as race relations are concerned! Moreover, it is the city of Detroit where schools are mixed, no cars are shut-crow, and no Negroes disfranchised. Besides, Michigan has a splendid civil rights law.

These figures and these circumstances make a cogent argument why colored men should sit on juries, especially when members of their race are being tried. It is even more important that colored men be jurors when the case involves a clash between both races.

Unfortunately very few sections, in practice, permit Negroes to sit on juries. More of them share this phase of the government in Chicago and New York than anywhere else. Still, not very many are called and serve in these two cities.

Probably the greatest break-down of justice in all parts of the country is in the courts. Testifying before a congressional committee recently, Clarence Darrow said Negroes do not get justice any place in America. True, but why do they not get justice? First, because they do not serve on juries in sufficiently large numbers. Next, why do they not serve on juries more frequently? It is because we lack that vigilant, persistent temperament whereby one is willing to annoy the other fellow to death until he gets his rights. At least twice as many should register and vote. Then, too, they don't make an issue of a thing in such a way as to crystallize sentiment and focus attention upon a special phase.

For instance, suppose Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia and New York colored voters would make the issue of the next campaign, the practice (not the right) of having more colored jurors. Suppose they pinned down judicial candidates and made them pledge (and keep that pledge) that they would insist on more general jury service of our Negro citizens. Suppose they went further and demanded that they have a member of their race among the jury commissioners. They could get it just as well as they now have Honorable Edward H. Wright, of Chicago, a member of the Illinois Commerce Commission and Ferdinand Q. Morton, one of the three members on the New York Civil Service Com-

mission. Both of these are positions with high pay, large responsibility and fraught with great consequence. In fact, the New York Commission has on it an Irish-Catholic, a Jew and a Negro.

The idea of having an efficient, honorable and loyal colored man in every department of the government should not be yielded nor slept upon by far-visioned citizens. It is just as important to have colored men jurors as it is to have colored school teachers and workmen and policemen. The jury is the last stand of justice. Let us henceforth make this fight for jurors our hardest one in the demand for civil rights.

FREES CAROLINA NEGRO.

Pittsburgh Judge Will Not Send Him Back to an All-White Jury.

PITTSBURGH, Jan. 2 (AP).—After hearing statements of D. C. Kirby, a North Carolina attorney, to the effect that Negroes were not permitted to serve on juries in that State, Common Pleas Court Judge James B. Drew today ordered that Sandy Lister, an aged negro, who is wanted in Winston-Salem on liquor law charges, be released on a writ of habeas corpus.

"I am not going to send this man back to North Carolina, where, as evident, if the facts related here are correct, he will not be given a fair trial, and where he was indicted by a Grand Jury on which colored people were not permitted to serve," said Judge Drew.

COLORED JURYWOMEN DEFEND VERDICT

(By the Associated Negro Press)

Camden, N. J., Feb. 3.—Mrs. Helen Ferguson, 911 Kaighan Avenue, one of the five colored women who were on the jury which freed Albert Atkins, 25 years, of 1734 Christian street, Philadelphia, who was accused of robbing the tailor shop of Joseph Berlin, Sixth and Pine Street issued a statement Saturday in which she defended the jury's action.

Mrs. Ferguson took issue with Judge Shay's statement that the verdict was a "miscarriage of justice." She also declared that like other members of the jury, she felt "insulted" at Judge Shay's action.

Atkins was accused of entering Berlin's place last November and stealing \$2,000 worth of cloth. The jury which freed him was out a little more than an hour.

Mrs. Ferguson's statement follows:

"I do not feel disgraced because of Judge Shay's action, but I really feel insulted. I have acted as juror this term and understood from the begin-

ning that jurors are supposed to return a verdict in accordance with the facts presented during the trial.

"If these facts are strong enough to convict, the verdict is guilty. If not, then the verdict is one of not guilty.

"In the case of Albert Atkins, the evidence was not strong enough to show that this boy had broken and entered the tailor shop of Joseph Berlin, so we brought in a verdict of not guilty.

"There was no thought of color, although there were five colored women on the jury, as has been emphasized before. At the first vote there were ten for acquittal and two for guilty, so it was easily seen at that period the colored women of the jury were not only ones to think that the boy was not guilty.

"Judge Shay claims that it was a miscarriage of justice. We, as 12 jurors, gave our decision as we saw fit. We may have caused a miscarriage of justice, but we feel as though we have honorably discharged our duty."